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Sir George Beaumont, after Sir Joshua Reynolds
Engraved by Charles Hodges

Print Rooms

Exhibition of Mezzotints

ONE of the great charms of prints is the infinite diversity of effects which the different processes carry into the restricted range of tones between the black of printer's ink and the white of the paper. A typical woodcut is quite distinct, in aspect, from a typical line engraving; this in turn differs widely from the sketchy freedom of a typical etching. The examples of mezzotint engraving now exhibited possess qualities widely removed from the woodcut, the line engraving, or the etching. The most striking characteristic of the mezzotint is expressed in its name; here is not a process of lines, but of those innumerable "half-tones" which lie between the initial black of the roughened copper plate and the ultimate high light due to vigorous burnishing,—these tones, these surfaces of graduated light and shade, form the legitimate sphere of the mezzotint. Small wonder that this *tone* process was conceived in Holland at a time when Rembrandt, de Hooghe, Vermeer, Maes were sounding the possibilities of chiaroscuro. The inventor of the new process, a German, Ludwig von Siegen, confided his discovery to a brother officer, Prince Rupert of the Palatinate. While the knowledge and practice of mezzotint engraving soon spread afar, important results cannot be claimed for the process outside of the Netherlands, whence Blooteling, the inventor of the mezzotint rocker, and some other engravers brought it into popular favor in England. The restoration of Charles II, the late seventeenth century, marks the beginning of the great era of portrait

painting and of mezzotint engraving in England. Both painters and engravers came from the continent at first, and in both fields their powers were soon equalled or surpassed by native talent. The new form of engraving was recognized by the painters as eminently suitable for the reproduction of their portraits, and became the unrivalled interpreter of their notable achievements. Thus mezzotint, with its Val. Green, McArdeell, Ward, Watson, S. W. Reynolds and others of equal fame, is for England what the great school of line engravers, with its Nanteuil, Masson, Morin, its Drevets and other masters of the graver, was for France, with lessened scope, however, for individual expression by the mezzotinter. The line engraver selects from a multitude of alternatives certain groupings or systems of lines or dots, light or heavy, close together or far apart, parallel shadings or cross-hatchings. With these he differentiates textures and substances. The mezzotinter is restricted to tone values. He controls the light and shade of his plate, but the texture of his tones is once for all established by the mechanical action of the rocker. The minute elongated dots of the rocker, crisscrossing the plate over and over, impart a technical similarity to all mezzotinting, however skillful the handling of scraper and burnisher. When finally the plate is successfully finished, it quickly wears, losing the delicate differentiations of tone as well as the wonderful bloom seen in fine, early impressions, such as the example (Case 6) chosen for illustration. Quality of impression, essential in all fields of the graphic arts, becomes paramount here, likewise careful preservation of the print, which is easily damaged by friction. Very good impressions will be found in Cases 5, 6, 16, 21, 22-25, and elsewhere, and their study will lead to a realization of the powerful charms of mezzotint engraving. E. H. R.

Two Greek Bronzes

THE characteristic concentration of Greek sculptors on the presentation of the human figure did not entirely exclude attention to animal life. In the development of Greek decorative art it has been often observed that animal forms precede human forms in order of time. In later phases of decoration types of beasts and birds sink to a subordinate position, exemplified most literally and obviously in the ornamentation of Attic vases of the sixth and fifth centuries B. C., in contrast with Eastern Greek or Ionian vase-painting in the seventh.

The finely-modelled small bronzes, however, which are pictured on this page, belong to the fifth century B. C. From the existence of fragments of a slightly curved horizontal strip of metal beneath the feet, it is inferred that they once stood on the rim of a large bronze vase. Both human and animal figures often appeared in such a connection. It is not unlikely that these two figures

are conceived as supplementary parts of one composition, though they may have been separated by a considerable space. The boar has a defensive posture; the lion is the assailant; but there is no less of fierce courage in the stubborn defense than in the stealthy attack. The glaring eyes, the ugly curl of the boar's lip, the threatening tusks compel attention; but the truth and vitality of the whole form, expressing both mass and energy, are still more noteworthy. The lion is more conventionally represented, perhaps with reference to artistic tradition; but here again the lowered head, the cat-like stride, the bared teeth, and the exaggeratedly powerful hind legs show the lion's nature and motion. In some details the artist has had to resort to convention. The ridge of the boar's back is represented by a ridge of metal engraved with many close vertical lines; and the lion's mane has become a fairly well-ordered series of flame-like locks, each of which is engraved with lines which suggest finer strands of hair, and recalls, though somewhat less noticeably related to decorative pattern, the locks on the limestone lion from Perachora, near Corinth, now shown in the Room of Archaic Greek Art. On a superb red-figured oinochoe in Case 19 of the Second Vase Room (Ground Floor), very nearly contemporary with these figures, are two lions threatening a bull from either side. Their open jaws and the bristling row of locks above their foreheads are not unlike those of the bronze.

It has already been mentioned that such subjects were an inheritance from the art of the Asiatic or Ionian Greeks. Among other representations of the wild boar in the Museum, it will be observed that one of the most conspicuous is on a carefully decorated Rhodian (Milesian?) plate of the seventh century B. C., in the First Vase Room. Lions are so common on all objects of Eastern



Bronze

Fifth Century B. C.

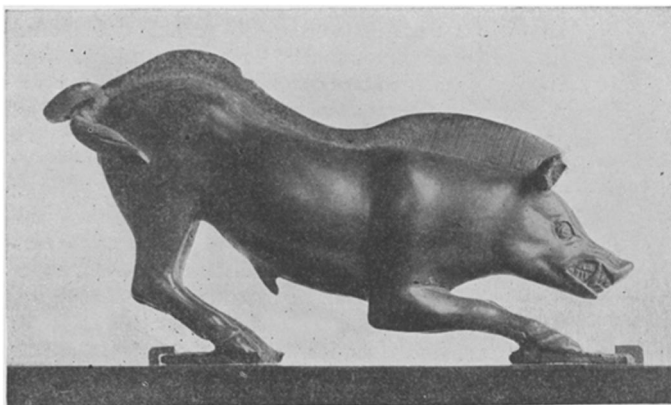
Greek origin that special direction to examples in the collections of the Classical Department is not necessary. The Museum possesses a green jasper seal stone whose device is a boar actually attacked by a lion. This gem was found in Sardinia, anciently colonized by the Phœnicians, and is perhaps an example of Semitic workmanship under Ionic influences. It may be noted that such types are more customary and hold their ground longer on the coins of Asiatic Greek cities than on those of European Greece. On Attic Greek vases the lion and the boar appear often on subordinate decorative zones, sometimes facing one another, but usually not actively hostile. They have become abstractly decorative figures, in strong contrast to the spirited beasts which the maker of the little bronzes has imagined.

These bronzes, exceptional not only in their intrinsic quality, but also in their almost perfect preservation, have been acquired for the Museum through the gift of friends of the Department of Classical Art. They are now exhibited in the Fifth Century Room.

S. N. D.

Oriental Glass

IT is an interesting fact that although the Saracens had no art of their own, and learned everything from the foreign peoples whom they conquered, yet they introduced something distinct and original into every branch of artistic work that they undertook. Their glass illustrates this in its shapes, style, and ornament, all of which are unique. In the beginning the industry seems to have been confined to the making of glass weights in the form of discs or large rings, with date, amount, and even the names of the Mameluke sultans of Egypt during the tenth and eleventh



Bronze

Fifth Century B. C.